

## BACKGROUND OF THE COMMITTEE OF PRACTITIONERS

In 1988, P.L. 100-297 authorized the State Department of Education to establish a Title I Committee of Practitioners (COP). In accordance with this statute, the committee is to be composed of administrators, teachers, parents, representatives of non-public school children and representatives of neglected and delinquent institutions. The law requires all major proposed or final rules or regulations issued by the state be reviewed by the Committee of Practitioners.

The major work conducted by the COP from 1989-1994 has been the development and implementation of the Title I Program Improvement Plan. This plan established the criteria by which districts identify schools in need of Title I program improvement, the steps to be taken to correct the program, and the role and responsibilities of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Title I office.

Arizona schools have embodied the intent of program improvement and provided leadership on innovative practices. ADE allocated \$750,000 to schools in support of their program improvement efforts. Expenditures include:

- Workshops and inservice programs which included intensive follow up,
- Innovative pilot projects,
- The planning and implementation of successful schoolwide projects,
- Dissemination of information on effective practices and programs,
- Visitations to outstanding demonstration projects, and
- Expert advice and council by distinguished educators.

In the five years the plan was operational, 68 percent of the schools which identified as being in need have implemented programs that resulted in significant achievement gains for their students.

The 1994 reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (P.L. 103-382) recognizes the positive contribution which have occurred since 1965. Although Title I (and other federal programs) have contributed to narrowing the achievement gap between children in high-poverty and low-poverty schools, educators realized that the programs must become even more effective in improving the quality of education at high-poverty schools so that all children will develop the knowledge, skills and habits of mind we once expected of only our top students.

Thus, for FY95 the primary charge for the COP was to assist in the development of an Arizona State Title I Plan, which would focus on aligning the Title I assessment system with the state assessment system, and developing a system of "school support teams" to assist Title I schools.

To that end, the COP subcommittee on Standards and Assessments carefully reviewed the requirements of the new law, and developed working definitions for "adequate yearly progress" and "levels of proficiency." These definitions will become part of the Consolidated State Plan (see below).

Meanwhile, the COP Teaching and Learning Subcommittee developed a plan for school support teams, which would be made up of volunteer educators from around the state who would be available to provide technical assistance and consultant services to high-poverty schools. Included is a plan for principal training in recognition of the key role of the principal in enacting and sustaining school reform.

In addition, the Funding Subcommittee reviewed and approved funding rubrics for several Title I discretionary grant programs, including Even Start, Title I reallocation, homeless education, and school improvement. The Neglected/Delinquent and Even Start subcommittees approved application and funding procedures for those programs as well.

The work of the FY96 COP was driven by two ADE initiatives - the first to develop a Consolidated State Plan for programs under the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA); the second to redesign the state's assessment system. The committee spent considerable time integrating its efforts to define a school support system into the Consolidated State Plan as well as aligning the Title I assessment requirements to the changing state assessment system. In addition, the Committee recommended that the Title I process of allocating funds from the state to local districts be revised to reduce reliance on inaccurate and out-of-date census data.

Thus, like educators throughout Arizona and the nation, the Committee of Practitioners has been forced to quickly react and adjust to the changing landscape of education in the 1990's.

The FY97 COP focused on the alignment of Title I assessment requirements with the new state standards and assessments, development of a comprehensive school support system for Title I schools, and implementation of the IASA Consolidated State Plan.

In FY98, the COP was expanded to consider all IASA issues. The key issues for the Committee included the continuation to align Title I assessment requirements with the state standards and assessments; to ensure that the IASA assessment system adequately addressed guidance for local assessment and consideration of special populations, continue to refine the School Support System; and to monitor the progress of the implementation of the IASA Consolidated State Plan.

FY 1999 - the emphasis was on the review of the Title I Transitional Assessment System, including the Performance Standard Setting Process. This process enabled the State to move forward on the Transitional Assessment System. The IASA Self-Assessment process, county vs. school district allocation process, private school services and School Support Team training were part of the 1999 agenda.

FY 2000 - the COP focused on the implementation of the Title I Transitional Assessment, including identifying schools and districts for improvement. In particular, the COP looked at how and when the Title I Transitional Assessment will be moved toward the state assessment system.

FY 2001 - the eligibility requirements for the Title I Accountability Grant were defined. Additionally, the committee undertook an examination of the issues regarding the transition from the Title I Transitional Assessment System to AIMS under Proposition 301. Finally, the committee discussed the implications of the reauthorization of the *Improving America's Schools Act*.

FY 2002 – the COP continued to focus on the reauthorization of the *Improving America's Schools Act*. As the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was signed into law, the committee discussed the topics of accountability, flexibility, parent choice and best practices. In addition, the committee examined the AZ LEARNS legislation in relation to NCLB.

COP members serve overlapping three-year terms, with one-third of the terms expiring each year. New members from a wide variety of backgrounds are selected by the COP based on their individual expertise and experience. Starting in FY98, the COP will be a cross programmatic committee, representing all IASA programs. The COP accepts nominations each spring to fill upcoming vacancies. For more information about becoming a COP member, contact Carrie Larson at (602) 542-1562.